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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000678

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NLD COMMEMORATES 14TH ANNIVERSARY OF 1990 ELECTIONS

REF: RANGOON 637

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

1. (C) Summary: The NLD on May 27 marked 14 years since the party's stunning victory in the 1990 general elections. At a somber event at party headquarters, attended by several hundred members and supporters, the NLD demanded that the results of the 1990 elections be implemented without delay. Despite the party's remarkable patience and persistence, however, the resolve of the military regime to retain full power remains undaunted. End Summary.

2. (U) The National League for Democracy (NLD) held a somber commemorative event on May 27 at party headquarters in Rangoon to mark the 14th anniversary of the 1990 general elections, won overwhelmingly by the NLD, but the results of which have never been recognized by the military regime. Several hundred party members and supporters attended the function, as did a dozen diplomats including COM, British Ambassador, UNDP resident representative, and officers from the Embassies of Japan, Germany, France, Italy, and Australia. Absent, of course, were NLD Vice Chairman U Tin Oo and General Secretary Aung San Suu Kyi who remain under house arrest.

3. (U) NLD Chairman U Aung Shwe delivered a statement in which the NLD demanded that the results of the 1990 elections be implemented without delay, declaring that "the country's political, economic, and social crises can only be solved by calling the Pyithu Hluttaw (Parliament) composed of members elected and mandated by the people."

4. (U) U Aung Shwe and other NLD speakers avoided direct reference to the SPDC's ongoing constitutional Convention, which the vast majority of Members-elect of Parliament, including NLD and other pro-democracy party members, are boycotting. However, the NLD Chairman made several pointed swipes at the regime's road map process, quoting sundry SPDC leaders, including Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt, who have over the years made unambiguous promises to allow an elected body of delegates draw up a new constitution.

5. (SBU) Several leaders of ethnic parties affiliated with the NLD delivered statements of support, calling for the release of ASSK and U Tin Oo and a political dialogue (the Kaman NLD even boldly declared the National Convention "illegitimate.") However, noticeably absent from the function was Hkun Htun Oo, leader of Burma's leading ethnic opposition party, the SNLD. Hkun Htun Oo is also chairman of the multi-ethnic, pro-democracy political coalition, the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA). The regime has in recent days made veiled threats toward the UNA, emphasizing that the coalition is not registered (and is therefore illegal) and that most of its member parties are barred from political activities.

6. (C) As a backdrop to the NLD's commemorative event, the military regime continues to flood state-run media with coverage of the National Convention, extolling the "progress" achieved by its hand-picked delegates in drafting a new constitution. According to sources who have had clandestine contact with sequestered delegates, regime authorities have blocked almost all participants from leaving the remote Convention site. Over the weekend of May 22-23, during a lull in scheduled events, numerous delegates unsuccessfully sought permission to leave in order to attend to personal and business matters. However, the expansive USDA training center is heavily guarded and the authorities have essentially responded "With karaoke rooms, a golf course, a beauty shop, and a hospital, you have all you need right here on the premises."

7. (C) Comment: For some in the NLD it seems impossible that 14 years have passed since their stunning victory at the polls in 1990. The cruel reality that the SPDC has blocked party members from assuming their rightful role as leaders of a freely elected Parliament has not, however, undercut the party's drive to press for democracy and national reconciliation. Patience and persistence, however, have done little to chip away at the resolve of the military regime to retain full power. End Comment.

Martinez